

continue even after the December 12 decision by the European Union, to accept Cyprus as a member. Mr. Annan stressed "we are going to continue our efforts and try to make progress as quickly as we can. If by the time of the accession the issues have not been resolved, I expect the talks to continue beyond the EU accession". The EU has made it clear for the past three years that a resolution of the Cyprus problem is not a precondition for Cyprus' EU accession and I support that viewpoint.

Cyprus and the United States have a great deal in common. We share a deep and abiding commitment to democracy, human rights, free markets, and the ideal and practice of equal justice under the law.

In fact, Cyprus was among the first nations to express its solidarity with the U.S. immediately following the September 11th terrorist attacks. Cyprus has taken many concrete and active steps to target the perpetrators, collaborators and financiers of terrorism. For example, Cyprus has endorsed and implemented all resolutions and decisions of the U.N. Security Council, the EU and other International Organizations pertaining to the fight against terrorism.

Unfortunately, Cyprus is not without its own difficult history. 37 percent of this nation is still occupied by a hostile foreign power, and it has been for more than 25 years.

On July 20, 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus, and to this day continues to maintain an estimated 35,000 heavily armed troops. Nearly 200,000 Greek Cypriots, who fell victim to a policy of ethnic cleansing, were forcibly evicted from their homes and became refugees in their own country.

Every year, on or around July 20, I, along with my dear friend Representative BILIRAKIS, sponsor a Special Order to remember the anniversary of the Turkish invasion in a tradition that has become one of our proudest traditions.

Despite the hardships and trauma caused by the ongoing Turkish occupation, Cyprus has registered remarkable economic growth, and the people living in the Government-controlled areas enjoy one of the world's highest standards of living. Sadly, the people living in the occupied area continue to be mired in poverty.

In the times we are facing, it is clear that divisions among people create harmful, destructive environments. The U.S. has expressed its unwavering support for a peaceful solution to the Cyprus problem and I wholeheartedly agree. The relationship between Cyprus and the United States is strong and enduring. We stand together celebrating democracy and freedom, hopeful that a peaceful solution will soon be negotiated and a united Cyprus will join the EU.

#### BLACK LUNG CONSOLIDATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES ACT

**HON. MELISSA A. HART**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 3, 2002*

Ms. HART. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to sponsor legislation, on behalf of the Administration, which would consolidate all of the re-

sponsibility for the administration of the Black Lung Benefits Program under a single agency. This proposal was initially outlined in the President's FY 2003 Budget for the Department of Labor.

The Black Lung Benefits Program was enacted as part of the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969, the first comprehensive Federal legislation to regulate health and safety conditions in the coal industry. The law created a temporary system to compensate victims of dust exposure in the mines with public funds administered by the Social Security Administration (SSA).

In 1972, the Act was amended to require the use of simplified interim eligibility for all claims filed with SSA and to transfer new claims to the Department of Labor (DOL) in 1973. The Office of Workers' Compensation Programs in DOL assumed responsibility for the processing and paying of new claims on July 1, 1973. Most of the claims filed prior to that date remained within the jurisdiction of SSA until 1997.

On September 26, 1997, officials from SSA and DOL signed a Memorandum of Understanding transferring responsibility for managing all active SSA Black Lung claims to DOL. This change was aimed at eliminating any confusion about which Federal agency handles the claims and enhancing customer service to all Black Lung beneficiaries. At present, DOL manages all Federal black lung claims, while formal appeals on Part B claims are referred to SSA. The Black Lung Consolidation of Administrative Responsibilities Act would simply transfer all of the responsibilities for the administration of claims under Part B of the Act to DOL, while retaining all regulations currently applicable to the beneficiaries' entitlements.

Besides improving administrative efficiency, this transfer of responsibilities will ensure the continuation of a high level of customer service to beneficiaries. Joint audits by the Office of the Inspector General of SSA and DOL have confirmed the high quality of claims-related services being provided by DOL. Last year, the University of Michigan released the results of a customer satisfaction survey of beneficiaries receiving services from DOL and found the highest level of customer satisfaction of any of the Federal benefits programs surveyed.

Finally, the legislation implements a long-standing recommendation by the Inspector General at DOL and SSA that the administrative responsibility for the Black Lung Benefits Act should be consolidated within DOL. This change would ensure the continuation of a high level of service to program beneficiaries, while eliminating confusion and duplication of administrative functions between the two agencies.

The Black Lung Consolidation of Administrative Responsibilities Act is simply common sense and good government. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

#### RECOGNIZING AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE

**HON. TAMMY BALDWIN**

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 3, 2002*

Ms. BALDWIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to today to recognize American Family Insurance,

which was founded in Madison, Wisconsin 75 years ago today on October 3, 1927.

American Family Insurance was originally founded as Farmers Mutual by Herman Wittwer. Its mission was to sell auto insurance to low-risk farmers. The first policyholder paid \$15.22 for his annual premium, which was 25 percent less than the going rate. It did not take long for Farmers Mutual to become the fastest growing insurance company in Wisconsin. (As time went by, Farmers Mutual expanded its market and product line and changed its name to American Family Insurance.)

Today, American Family is Madison's largest private employer and largest company as measured by annual revenue. It provides jobs to 3,500 employees in Madison and 7,500 employees across 17 states. American Family Insurance is the tenth largest property/casualty insurance company in nation and the fourth largest mutual insurance company. At the ranking of 337, it is Dane County's only listing on the Fortune 500.

I am proud that through all of American Family's growth and expansion, the company has remained true to its Madison and Wisconsin roots. The company has shown its commitment to the area through its community giving and involvement. American Family donates more than \$1 million annually to groups and organizations that help enhance quality of life and provide opportunities for everyone in our communities.

Congratulations on 75 great years.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. PETER DEUTSCH**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 3, 2002*

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably absent from the chamber today during rollcall vote No. 427, No. 428, and No. 429. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall vote No. 427, "yea" on rollcall vote No. 428 and "nay" on rollcall vote No. 429.

#### JOSEPH J. URBAN: PUSHING THE POLKA

**HON. JAMES A. BARCIA**

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, October 3, 2002*

Mr. BARCIA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor my very good friend, Joe Urban of Bay City, Michigan, for his induction into the Michigan State Polka Music Hall of Fame and for his many years of cultivating and publicizing polka music in our shared hometown. The polka has long been king in Bay City, especially among the members of our significant Polish and German communities, and Joe Urban has been a polka fan and promoter since he was a boy.

Although Joe never learned to play a musical instrument, he has been beating the proverbial drum on behalf of his fellow polka music enthusiasts for more than 40 years. In 1959, he began promoting polka for festivals at St. Hyacinth Catholic Church and for dances at Pulaski Hall in Bay City. Joe's Polish Circle dinnerdances became legendary in